

REMARKS

In the April 5, 2006 Non-Final Office Action, claims 1, 2, 4, 7-9, 16, 32-34, and 41-43 were rejected to by the Examiner. Claims 17, 18, and 20 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The Examiner withdrew the prior allowability of claim 16 in view of a newly discovered reference. This Amendment and Reply is intended to be completely responsive to the Non-Final Office Action.

The Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow.

This amendment adds, changes and/or deletes claims in this application. A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claim(s) remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier.

After amending the claims as set forth above, claims 1, 2, 4, 7-9, 16-18, 20, 32-34, and 41-43 are now pending in this application.

1. Status of the Claims

Claims 1, 16, 17, 32, and 41 are currently being amended.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 7-9, 16-18, 20, 32-34, and 41-43 remain pending in the present application.

2. Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

a. Claims 1, 2, 4, 7-9, and 32-34

On page 2 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 2, 4, 7-9, and 32-34 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by McCaskey (“McCaskey,” U.S. Pat. No. 1,314,600).

In the prior amendment, claim 1 was amended to recite a system of expandable tubulars “the corresponding insertion extension being configured to axially inserted into the receiving extension and spreading the narrow outer portion until the expanded region is captured in the wider inner portion....” With this amendment, claim 1 has been amended for clarity by adding the word “be” after “configured to” and before “axially inserted.”

McCaskey does not disclose a system of expandable tubulars having, among other elements, an insertion extension being configured to be axially inserted into the receiving extension. Rather, McCaskey discloses an extension that may be positioned into a corresponding opening by lateral movement. See Col. 3 ll 4-27. There is no teaching or suggestion in McCaskey that the links may are configured to be axially inserted into the receiving extension and spreading the narrow outer portion until the expanded region is captured in the wider inner portion. The Examiner states that the links are “inherently capable of being expanded,” however there is no teaching or suggestion in the reference that this is so, unless the Examiner believes that the cited tubulars are longitudinally expandable by adding links to the tubular. In order to further prosecution, Applicant has amended claim 1 to recite that the expandable tubulars are “radially expandable.” Accordingly, claim 1 and corresponding dependent claims 2, 4, and 7-9, are believed to be patentable over the cited reference.

Also in the prior amendment, claim 32 was amended to recite a system of tubulars comprising “a first expandable tubular, a second expandable tubular... and a sand barrier disposed along the connector system....” As stated above in regards to claim 1, claim 34 has been amended to recite “radially expandable tubular.” McCaskey does not disclose a system of tubulars having, among other elements, a first radially expandable tubular and a second radially expandable tubular. Accordingly, claim 32 and corresponding dependent claims 33 and 34 are believed to be patentable over the cited reference.

Accordingly, claims 1, 2, 4, 7-9, and 32-34 are believed to be in condition for allowance. Withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and allowance of claims 1, 2, 4, 7-9, and 32-34 is respectfully requested.

b. Claim 16

On page 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claim 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Smith (“Smith,” U.S. Pat. No. 5,295,506). Claim 16 has been amended to recite “a first radially expandable tubular” and “a second radially expandable tubular. Smith does not teach or suggest a radially expandable tubular. Accordingly, claim 16 is believed to be patentable over the cited reference.

Accordingly, claim 16 is believed to be in condition for allowance. Withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and allowance of claim 16 is respectfully requested.

c. Claims 41-43

On page 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 41-43 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Matthews et al. (“Matthews,” U.S. Pat. No. 4,706,659).

Also with this amendment, claim 41 has been amended to recite a system of expandable tubulars comprising “a first radially expandable tubular, a second radially expandable tubular... and a slide cover slidably mounted on the first tubular, wherein the slide cover may be slid relative to the first tubular and into engagement with the second tubular to secure the second tubular to the first tubular....” Matthews does not disclose a system of tubulars having, among other elements, a first radially expandable tubular and a second radially expandable tubular. Accordingly, claim 41 and corresponding dependent claims 42 and 43 are patentable over the cited reference.

Accordingly, claims 41-43 are believed to be in condition for allowance. Withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and allowance of claims 41-43 is respectfully requested.

3. Claim Objections/Allowable Subject Matter

a. Claims 17, 18, and 20

On page 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner objected to claims 17, 18, and 20 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 17 has been rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, claim 17 and corresponding dependent claims 18 and 20 are believed to be in condition for allowance. Withdrawal of the objection and allowance of claims 17, 18, and 20 is respectfully requested.

4. Conclusion

The Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 06-1447. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by the credit card payment form being unsigned, providing incorrect information resulting in a rejected credit card transaction, or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 06-1447.

If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, the Applicants hereby petition for such extension under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 and authorize payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 06-1447.

Respectfully submitted,

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